

## Sleep Disorders

Most adults need at least eight hours of sleep every night to be well rested. Not everyone gets the sleep they need. About 40 million people in the United States suffer from sleep problems every year.

Not getting enough sleep for a long time can cause health problems. For example, it can make problems like diabetes and high blood pressure worse.

Many things can disturb your sleep.

- working long hours
- stress
- a sick child
- light or noise from traffic or TV, and
- feeling too hot or cold.
- wine, beer, or liquor

### What are the different types of sleep disorders?

Some common sleep disorders are:

- insomnia
- feeling sleepy during the day
- snoring
- sleep apnea

### Insomnia includes:

- trouble falling asleep,
- having trouble getting back to sleep, and
- waking up too early.

Insomnia is more common in females, people with depression, and in people older than 60.

Most people will have trouble falling asleep from time to time. It is usually nothing to worry about. Stress, like the loss of a job or a death in the family could cause problems falling asleep. Certain medicines can make it hard to fall asleep. Drinking alcohol or eating too close to bedtime can keep you awake, too.

Insomnia is called chronic (long-term) when it lasts most nights for a few weeks or more. You should see your doctor if this happens.

### Treatment:

Taking medicine together with some changes to your routine can help most people with insomnia (about 85 percent). Certain drugs work in the brain to help promote sleep.

### Feeling Sleepy During the Day

Feeling tired every now and then is normal. It is not normal for sleepiness to interfere with your daily life. Watch for signs like:

- slowed thinking
- trouble paying attention
- heavy eyelids
- feeling cranky

### Tips for Better Sleep

- Go to bed and get up at the same times each day.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, beer, wine and liquor in the four to six hours before bedtime.
- Don't exercise within two hours of bedtime.
- Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime.
- Don't nap later than 3 p.m.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet room that isn't too hot or cold for you.
- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something quiet.
- Wind down in the 30 minutes before bedtime by doing something relaxing.

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## ***Sleep Disorders (cont.)***

Several sleep disorders can make you sleepy during the day. One of these is narcolepsy. People with narcolepsy feel very sleepy even after a full night's sleep.

It is normal to take between 10 and 20 minutes to fall asleep. People who fall asleep in less than five minutes may have a serious sleep disorder.

### **Snoring**

Snoring is noisy breathing during sleep. It is caused by vibrating in the throat. Some people can make changes that will stop snoring. These include:

- losing weight,
- cutting down on smoking and alcohol, and
- sleeping on your side instead of on your back

#### ***Treatment:***

You can buy over-the-counter nasal strips to help prevent snoring. You place one over your nose before going to bed to make breathing easier.

### **Sleep Apnea**

Snoring loud and often, together with too much daytime sleepiness, may be signs of sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a very common sleep disorder. It is also very dangerous. The most common type of sleep apnea happens when your breathing stops during sleep. It can stop for about 10 seconds to as long as a minute. You wake up trying to breathe. This stop-and-start cycle of waking to breathe can repeat hundreds of times a night. The danger is that some time you may not wake up to breathe. If this happens, you can die.

You are likely to feel sleepy during the day if you have this problem. People with sleep apnea tend to be overweight. It is more common among men than women.

#### ***Treatment:***

- The most common treatment is a device that pushes air through the airway. This device is called a CPAP.
- Avoid beer, wine, liquor, tobacco, and sleeping pills.
- Your doctor may also suggest you lose weight.
- In some cases, you may need surgery to make the airway bigger.

### **To Learn More...**

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[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)  
[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)